Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 19 Number 5 May 2022

DECCAN BIRDERS: 33rd ANNUAL GENERAL BODY MEETING
Minutes of the Meeting

Date: May 14, 2022
Time: 6:00PM to 8:00PM
Location: Vidyaranya High School, Hyderabad

- The President, JVD Moorty, started the proceedings by welcoming all members present to the AGM and thanking them for attending.

- The quorum required is 20 members as per Bye Law #26. As the quorum was not there, the meeting was adjourned & reconvened after 15 minutes, as per the Bye-Laws.

- Meanwhile 3 other members also arrived; the final tally of members present was 22.

President's Address

- The President remarked that the last AGM was held on April 27, 2019, and the next AGM would have been due in April 2021. However, the onset of the pandemic in March 2020 threw all schedules haywire. The feasibility of an online AGM was discussed by the Executive Committee, but the modalities appeared complicated and hence it was decided to wait a while till this physical meeting could be held.

- He informed the members present of the sad demise of three of our members during the pandemic, and requested that a two-minute silence be observed in their memory. The three members are:
    - G Ashok Kumar
    - Thomas Rajendra Prasad
    - D Avinandan

- He read out the minutes of the last AGM, held on April 27, 2019. After some discussion on the same, and since no amendments were suggested, Aasheesh Pittie proposed that the minutes be taken as confirmed, and the same was seconded by Humayun Taher.

Secretary's Report

- The Secretary, Surekha A, shared the details of the field trips, indoor meetings and other activities for the past three years (2019-2022).

- A total of 11 indoor meetings were held in 2019. There were no indoor meetings in 2020 and 2021.

- Since the pandemic had put a stop to all gatherings, a series of webinars had been organised in lieu of the field trips and indoor meetings. Between April 2019 and November 2021, a total of 44 webinars were organised, involving experts in their fields (Ornithology, Zoology, etc); they delivered fascinating talks on a range of topics of interest to our members.

- The highlight, and truly a session to remember, was a very lively one-on-one interactive session with Richard Grimmett, Carol and Tim Inskipp, the authors of the field guide, Birds of the Indian Subcontinent.

- Other activities included the Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) in 2021 (on a small scale) and 2022, and the HSBC Bird Race (which saw the final session being conducted online).

- The support given by the German Centre (Goethe Zentrum) to the society in organising indoor meetings at their centre was placed on record.

Treasurer's Report

- In the absence of the Treasurer, Dr Krishna Nagarajan, who was unable to attend the AGM, the Vice-President, K Bharadwaj presented the accounts for the period April 2019-March 2020 and April 2020-March 2021.

- Members present were given a copy of the audited Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss statements (attached below).

- Income for the society included Fixed Deposit interest income, Membership fees, and Income from Sale of merchandise (Deccan Birders T-Shirts & Caps).

- Expenses for the society showed a decline as the pandemic prevented many activities from being taken up.

- Details of various expenses over the intervening period were shared by the Vice-President during the course of the presentation.

- A couple of queries were put forth by members. Aasheesh Pittie enquired about the hosting and other charges for the website. Humayun enquired about tax-saving procedures being adopted by the Society and suggested a few measures for the same.

- The present auditors for the Society are CKS Associates. It was suggested by the President that the Society continue with the same auditors for the forthcoming period. The same was proposed by Nanda Kumar and seconded by Aasheesh Pittie.

- The accounts for the said two years were taken as read. This was proposed by Aasheesh Pittie and seconded by Rajashekar Tummala.

Membership Update & Pitta

- Umesh Mani, who maintains the member database and the e-group, gave the members present an update on the current membership of the Society, which stands at a grand total of 502 members, of which 444 are Life Members. The number of e-group members stands at 428.

- Aasheesh Pittie proposed that the Pitta be made available to non-members as well. The President acknowledged the same and said that the Executive Committee would take it under advisement.

- Aasheesh Pittie placed on record his appreciation for the amount of work being done by the editors of Pitta in ensuring its high quality and regular publication every month; the same sentiment was echoed by other members present.

Other Matters

- Shafaat Ulla proposed that Aasheesh Pittie be made President Emeritus of the Society. This suggestion was enthusiastically and vociferously received by the members. Aasheesh, however, very graciously declined to accept the offer with the remark that a doyen of ornithology had already been conferred with this status, and he felt it would not be right for him to accept it.

- Humayun Taher suggested reviving the tradition of honouring conservation efforts by members and proposed the name of K Mrutyumjaya Rao as the first recipient of the honour, which was seconded by Aasheesh Pittie.

- Dr Ajit Kumar suggested instituting an annual award in the name of a senior Deccan Birders member, which was seconded by Surekha A. Aasheesh Pittie, however, suggested that the award should be in the name of Deccan Birders and not a specific person, and also that it should be ad hoc (awarded whenever there was a deserving person) and not necessarily an annual conferral.

- Aasheesh Pittie was very vocal about the role Deccan Birders plays in society and said that the data gathered on birds during the AWC and other activities is not just the property of the Society, but should be shared with any organisation who may request for such data from time to time. Deccan Birders, he said, is firstly and finally a birdwatching society. Dr Ajit Kumar also pointed out that there was no legal liability in sharing the data with others.

- Rajashekar Tummala raised three points:
    - He reported that the University of Hyderabad noted the poaching of Peafowl on their campus and wanted to know how the Society could help to prevent this

- He also said that there exists a toll-free number for reporting the use of Chinese manja in kite strings; he proposed that the same be publicised on the website and in the Pitta, especially during the Sankranti period
- He suggested that Deccan Birders should approach the Posts & Telegraphs Department for the release of a Special Cover celebrating four decades of Deccan Birders. This suggestion was enthusiastically received by the members

- Srikanth Bhamidipati implored members to participate and get involved more actively in the activities of the Society, to make it more visible and spread awareness of conservation to a wider spectrum of population.

- As Surekha A had announced her decision to step down from the Executive Committee and from the position of Secretary, the President placed on record his appreciation for her contribution to the activities of the Society during the difficult pandemic times. Surekha, in her response, thanked all the members present and also the Executive Committee for their cooperation in all matters official.

New Executive Committee (for the period 2022-2024)

- The term of the existing Executive Committee came to an end with this AGM. To oversee the election of a new Executive Committee, Humayun Taher was made the Returning Officer.

- As per the Bye-Laws of the Society, the outgoing Executive Committee is expected to suggest names of people for the next term of the Executive Committee. For this purpose, outgoing Executive Committee suggested the following names to continue as Executive Committee members:

    - JVD Moorty
    - K Bharadwaj
    - Dr Krishna Nagarajan
    - Umesh Mani
    - Srikanth Bhamidipati
    - Sagarika Melkote
    - Gowthama Poludasu
    - Sudhir Moorti

- In addition, two places had fallen vacant with the resignation of Vinay Kumar Akula and Surekha A. In response to an earlier call for nominations to the Executive Committee, sent out to the members of the Society, two nominations had been received – from Gokul Krishna Addanki and Sathvik Reddy.

- Since there were only ten nominations received for the ten-member Executive Committee, the Returning Officer declared the above-mentioned ten persons elected.

- As per the Bye-Laws of the Society, the new Executive Committee, in their first meeting, would decide amongst themselves the names of the various office-bearers.

Vote of Thanks

- In his summing up, the President then re-emphasised that Deccan Birders had been successful in building a degree of global visibility, especially during the series of webinars over the past two years – wherein we had been able to secure the contribution and participation of several luminaries of the ornithology world, as well as the attendance of participants from countries as far and wide as the Philippines, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, South Africa and the Americas. He exhorted the members to work for greater recognition of the Society.

- He expressed his thanks to the members of the outgoing Executive Committee for their dedication and service to the Society during the term gone by, and expressed the hope and confidence that the incoming Executive Committee would strive to take the Society forward to even greater heights.

- The meeting was closed with a vote of thanks to Vidyaranya High School for providing the room, amenities and personnel for the AGM, and to all the members present at the meeting.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT MARCH 31, 2020

			31.03.2020	***31.03.2019***
LIABILITIES				
Capital Fund				
Opening balance			***15,98,684***	14,99,325
Add: Life Membership Fees			***39,000***	38,500
Add: Donations to Corpus			***36,900***	47,980
Add: Excess of Income over Expenditure for the year			***19,400***	12,878
			16,93,983	***15,98,684***
Current Liabilities				
Advance from Members			-	200
		Total	***16,93,983***	**15,98,884**
ASSETS				
Cash and Bank Balances				
Cash on hand			***2,530***	4,221
Balance in Savings Bank account with Canara Bank			***5,70,743***	44,743
Fixed Deposit with Banks			***10,92,642***	15,00,000
Closing stock			***11,000***	31,400
Other Current Assets				
Tax Deducted at Source			***5,863***	5,506
Fixed Assets (Annexure-I)				
(net of depreciation)			***11,205***	13,014
		Total	***16,93,983***	**15,98,884**

Notes to Accounts and Accounting Policies form an integral part of accounts.

For C K S ASSOCIATES
Chartered Accountants
FRN: 007390S

For and on behalf of
DECCAN BIRDERS

N.V.S.SRIKRISHNA
Partner
M. No. 25139

JVD Moorty	**Krishna Nagarajan**	**Surekha Aitabathula**
President	**Hon.Treasurer**	**Hon.Secretary**

April 15, 2019
Hyderabad

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

		31.03.2020	**31.03.2019**
INCOME			
Interest from Bank on Savings Bank account		***6,456***	2,432
Interest from Bank on Fixed Deposits		***1,02,128***	1,06,673
Membership Fee		***5,100***	1,700
Interest on IT Refund		***357***	-
Sale of Caps and T-Shirts		***28,150***	26,000
Closing stock of Caps and T-Shirts		***11,000***	31,400
Total		***1,53,191***	**1,68,205**
EXPENDITURE			
Opening Stock of T-Shirts		***31,400***	-
Purchase of T Shirts & Caps		***-***	50,000
BSAP Expenses		***-***	970
Annual Dinner Expenses		***44,688***	-
Conveyance		***-***	2,500
Postage and Courier		***513***	2,722
Printing and Stationery		***2,293***	10,631
Books & Periodicals		***1,840***	-
Audit Fees		***10,000***	10,000
Library Rent		***18,000***	6,000
Meeting Expenses		***895***	8,489
Miscellaneous Expenses		***2,503***	4,935
Post Box Charges		***150***	150
Depreciation		***1,809***	2,110
Website Hosting		***6,500***	-
Honorarium		***6,000***	
Stipend		***7,200***	4,800
Professional Charges		***-***	40,000
Registration Charges		***-***	12,020
Total		***1,33,791***	***1,55,327***
Excess of Income over Expenditure transferred to Capital Fund		***19,400***	12,878

Notes to Accounts and Accounting Policies form an integral part of accounts.

For C K S ASSOCIATES
Chartered Accountants
FRN: 007390S

N.V.S.SRIKRISHNA
Partner
M. No. 25139

April 15, 2019
Hyderabad

For and on behalf of
DECCAN BIRDERS

JVD Moorty	**Krishna Nagarajan**	**Surekha Aitabathula**
President	**Hon.Treasurer**	**Hon.Secretary**

BALANCE SHEET AS AT MARCH 31, 2021

			31.03.2021	***31.03.2020***
LIABILITIES			`	`
Capital Fund				
Opening balance			***16,93,984***	15,98,684
Add: Life Membership Fees			***42,000***	39,000
Add: Donations to Corpus			***39,500***	38,900
Add: Excess of Income over Expenditure for the year			***43,800***	17,400
			18,19,284	***16,93,984***
Current Liabilities				
Outstanding expenses			***39,787***	-
		Total	***18,59,071***	**16,93,984**
ASSETS				
Cash and Bank Balances				
Cash on hand			***4,199***	2,530
Balance in Savings Bank account with Canara Bank			***1,27,402***	5,70,743
Fixed Deposit with Banks			***17,00,000***	10,92,642
Closing stock			***8,150***	11,000
Other Current Assets				
Tax Deducted at Source			***11,975***	5,863
Fixed Assets (Annexure-I)				
(net of depreciation)			***7,345***	11,206
		Total	***18,59,071***	**16,93,984**

Notes to Accounts and Accounting Policies form an integral part of accounts.

For C K S ASSOCIATES
Chartered Accountants
FRN: 007390S

For and on behalf of
DECCAN BIRDERS

V.SRINATH
Partner
M.No.021185

JVD Moorty	**Krishna Nagarajan**	**Surekha Aitabathula**
President	**Hon.Treasurer**	**Hon.Secretary**

September 25, 2021
Hyderabad

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2021

		31.03.2021	**31.03.2020**
INCOME			
Interest from Bank on Savings Bank account		***9,543***	6,456
Interest from Bank on Fixed Deposits		***98,233***	1,02,128
Membership Fee		***8,700***	5,100
Interest on IT Refund		***-***	357
Sale of Caps and T-Shirts		***4,000***	28,150
Closing stock of Caps and T-Shirts		***8,150***	11,000
Total		***1,28,626***	**1,53,191**
EXPENDITURE			
Opening Stock of T-Shirts		***11,000***	31,400
Annual Dinner Expenses		***-***	44,688
Postage and Courier		***461***	513
Printing and Stationery		***1,720***	2,293
Books & Periodicals		***-***	1,840
Audit Fees		***10,000***	10,000
Library Rent		***12,000***	18,000
Meeting Expenses		***-***	895
Miscellaneous Expenses		***5,847***	2,503
Post Box Charges		***150***	150
Depreciation		***1,296***	1,809
Website Hosting		***20,588***	6,500
Honorarium		***12,000***	6,000
Stipend		***7,200***	7,200
Assets Written off		***2,564***	-
Total		***84,826***	***1,33,791***
Excess of Income over Expenditure transferred to Capital Fund		***43,800***	19,400

Notes to Accounts and Accounting Policies form an integral part of accounts.

For C K S ASSOCIATES
Chartered Accountants
FRN: 007390S

V.SRINATH
Partner
M.No.021185

For and on behalf of
DECCAN BIRDERS

JVD Moorty	**Krishna Nagarajan**	**Surekha Aitabathula**
President	**Hon.Treasurer**	**Hon.Secretary**

September 25, 2021
Hyderabad

* * *

Trip Report: Pulicat Lake Bird Sanctuary, March 2022

Text & Photos: Sita Susarla

A view of Pulicat Lake

The Pulicat Lake Bird Sanctuary is situated partly in Andhra Pradesh and partly in Tamil Nadu. The lake is fed by the river Arani in the southern tip and the Kalangi river in the North west. The lake is a rich source of aquatic life forms such as prawns and fish. Many migratory birds stop over at the lake. Be it the terns and gulls, or the waders like curlews, whimbrels and flamingoes, or the storks and pelicans, you get to see them in large numbers here.

The largest of the wading birds, the Greater Flamingo, is seen visiting the sanctuary in thousands. There were only a few of them on the Tamil Nadu side of the lake when we visited in mid-March. However, a few weeks earlier we had seen thousands of flamingoes near Meezuru village on the Andhra Pradesh side of the lake – but that is a story for another day.

Greater Crested Tern, Lesser Crested Tern and Caspian Tern

Our visit to the Tamil Nadu side of the lake was mainly to see the varieties of terns and waders that we were informed would be on view. We spent about two and a half hours boating around the lake. The Greater Crested Tern was the first to be sighted, and close on the heels of this sighting were the Lesser Crested Terns. The main differences between them are the size of the bird and the color of the beak – while the former is bigger with a yellow beak, the latter is smaller and sports an orange beak.

Next was the Caspian Tern, the largest tern in the world, which is easily recognizable by its prominent orange-red bill with a black tip. We saw two of them from close range and, a little further ahead of them, were flocks of Little Terns and Whiskered Terns.

Caspian Tern

Our boatman was a very enterprising guide and took care not to miss any bird. He maneuvered the boat deftly around the lake and showed us most birds from a safe distance so as not to disturb them. He also took care to stop at the right spot so that lighting is ideal for photography.

Little Tern

On the sand bars were Sanderlings, Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, Terek and Curlew Sandpipers, a few Eurasian Curlews and Whimbrels, as well as a lone juvenile Pallas's Gull. I was happy that we were able to get some very good pictures.

Sanderling

Brown-headed Gull

As we moved further to the broader sandbars, we saw flocks of Brown-headed Gulls, some terns once again of different types, and a rare sighting of the Eurasian Oystercatcher, standing distinctly among them. Apparently, it is rarely sighted at that time of the year, may be having stayed longer due to the abundance of food.

At another point of the lagoon, we had an amazing sighting of a colony of Pacific Golden Plovers, around thirty-five of them, or possibly more, well-camouflaged in the golden sands. We had never seen so many of them at one place and were able to get some good pictures and videos. In between the Golden Plovers were the Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers.

Pacific Golden Plover

Terek Sandpiper

The Terek Sandpipers were very actively foraging. Just then, a White-bellied Sea Eagle glided past above us, and it was a great sight.

Though the heat was building up after mid-day, we continued with our birding for a while, as we were thrilled to see so much bird activity. Overall it was a fantastic trip for us with four lifers.

A full list of the birds seen is given below:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	19	Greater Crested Tern	*Thalasseus bergii*
2	Eurasian Oystercatcher	*Haematopus ostralegus*	20	Lesser Crested Tern	*Thalasseus bengalensis*
3	Pacific Golden Plover	*Pluvialis fulva*	21	Asian Openbill	*Anastomus oscitans*
4	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	22	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*
5	Lesser Sand Plover	*Charadrius mongolus*	23	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*
6	Greater Sand Plover	*Charadrius leschenaultii*	24	Spot-billed Pelican	*Pelecanus philippensis*
7	Kentish Plover	*Charadrius alexandrinus*	25	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*
8	Whimbrel	*Numenius phaeopus*	26	Great Egret	*Ardea alba*
9	Eurasian Curlew	*Numenius arquata*	27	Intermediate Egret	*Ardea intermedia*
10	Curlew Sandpiper	*Calidris ferruginea*	28	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*
11	Sanderling	*Calidris alba*	29	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*
12	Little Stint	*Calidris minuta*	30	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*
13	Terek Sandpiper	*Xenus cinereus*	31	White-bellied Sea Eagle	*Haliaeetus leucogaster*
14	Brown-headed Gull	*Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus*	32	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
15	Pallas's Gull	*Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus*	33	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
16	Little Tern	*Sternula albifrons*	34	Long-tailed Shrike	*Lanius schach*
17	Caspian Tern	*Hydroprogne caspia*	35	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*
18	Whiskered Tern	*Chlidonias hybrida*	36	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*

* * *

Trip Report: Ramadevarabatta WLS & Cauvery WLS, Karnataka, Feb 19-22, 2022

Text & Photos: Umesh Mani

Entrance to the Ramadevarabatta Wildlife Sanctuary

In mid-Feb 2022, three of us – Dr Arun and Mrs Vasanthi, birder friends from Chennai, and I – decided to undertake a quick trip to Ramadevarabatta WLS and Cauvery WLS in Karnataka. Ramadevarabatta WLS is well known as one of the few breeding locations of the Long-billed (or Indian) Vulture in South India, and we were hopeful of spotting not just this, but other Vultures as well as other raptor species.

The journey to Ramanagara – the station where we need to disembark for the Ramadevarabatta WLS – is a very convenient one from Chennai – a late-evening train gets us to Ramanagara early the next morning, in time to freshen up and start birding.

Ramanagara is a fairly nondescript, generic town like the hundred other such towns that have come up along our National Highways. However, Ramanagara has a unique claim to fame – this is where possibly the most iconic and path-breaking Hindi movie of all time, Sholay, had been filmed. The walls outside the railway station bear witness to this, with several scenes from the movie painted all over.

We reached Ramanagara as planned, excited about what sightings were in store for us. We were fortunate to have the assistance of a local birder friend, Sasi, who had made the necessary arrangements for our trip.

Day-1: Feb 19, 2022, morning session: Ramadevarabatta WLS

After freshening up at Sasi's place, we had to wait a little as our vehicle had got delayed. So we decided to start birding nearby, and quickly chalked up a few nice species – White-cheeked Barbet, Jerdon's Leafbird, etc. Then the vehicle arrived and we headed off to the sanctuary. As soon as we entered, we saw a pair of Indian Vultures up on a cliff. On a visit a few years ago, we had seen the Vultures on the same cliff; Sasi informed us that they had continued to breed in the same area for the past several years.

We had been watching them for a few minutes when my attention was caught by a brownish bird preening in the clutter of a tree nearby. On checking, I was happy to find that it was the Sirkeer Malkoha – this was a bird that I had seen so many times, but never managed to photograph properly, and this sighting kindled my hopes again!

White-browed Bulbul

We tracked and followed it for a while as it hopped from tree to tree before finally disappearing over a small rocky hillock. Still no photos for me, and I wondered if this was to be another of those days. Anyway, moving on, we ticked off the Red-vented and White-browed Bulbuls, Laughing Dove, Purple Sunbird etc, before settling down to watch the Vultures for some more time. We were now a little closer to the cliff, and the views were somewhat better.

Long-billed (aka Indian) Vulture

Walking ahead, we saw the females of the Purple-rumped Sunbird and Golden Oriole, and a Red-whiskered Bulbul – but still not the Bulbul that is a specialty of the Western Ghats – the Yellow-browed. A pair of Jerdon's Leafbirds and a Greenish Warbler also made their presence felt.

Jerdon's Leafbird

Greenish Warbler

A little further, we came upon a patch of forest that was completely covered with fallen dry leaves. Hearing some rustling, we stopped to check, and found a pair of Puff-throated Babblers moving around there foraging, as well as sometimes collecting nesting material. It was nice to know that this beautiful Babbler was nesting in the area.

Puff-throated Babbler with nesting material

Blue-faced Malkoha with prey

Suddenly, there was a bit of commotion in the trees above and, looking up, we saw a Blue-faced Malkoha – and one more – and then one more! It was a veritable party, as they hopped all around, looking for caterpillars. I saw one of them catch what seemed to be an alate (termite with wings), and another grab a moth, which they proceeded to consume with great relish.

Sirkeer Malkoha

But they were soon upstaged by the arrival of – the Sirkeer! A pair of them hung around for a while – this time, for a change, in the open branches of a dry tree, and in good light to boot – and I finally managed to get some photos of the Sirkeer – not perfect, but decent, and my first in more than sixteen years of birding! Naturally I was happy. After a few minutes, the Sirkeer Malkohas decided that they had obliged me enough, and flew off.

Polypedates sp

At a small Forest Department building nearby, we saw a frog that turned out to be a member of the Polypedates genus of Tree and Shrub frogs. The delicately coloured frog was quite beautiful. At the same place, we saw a huge mass of the Daddy Longlegs spiders (*Pholcidae sp*). It was quite incredible – I had never seen so many spiders together earlier!

Daddy Longlegs spider (*Pholcidae sp*)

Shaheen Falcon

We then started walking back, since we had to move on from Ramanagara to Cauvery WLS that afternoon, a three-hour drive away, and hoped to get in at least a couple of hours birding in the evening. However, the sanctuary was not yet done with us – as we were leaving, we were blessed with a view of a Shaheen Falcon that also seemed to have made its home in the same cliffs.

Sasi witnessed the mating of the Long-billed Vultures, which the rest of us unfortunately missed. At a small pond near the sanctuary gates, we also saw the Common and White-throated Kingfishers.

That was it for the morning. We then got back to the room after a quick lunch *en route*, washed up and started off for Cauvery.

<u>Day-1: Feb 19, 2022, afternoon session: Cauvery WLS</u>

The Cauvery WLS covers an area of around 1025 hectares and is located at the junction of Mandya, Chamarajnagar and Ramanagara districts of Karnataka. It has a unique combination of riverine, dry deciduous and tropical dry thorn forests, and hence is home to a good variety of birds.

We reached the Cauvery WLS around 3:00PM. Sasi had made arrangements for us to stay at an ecotourism resort near the sanctuary at Bhimeshwari, so we dropped off our bags there, had a quick cup of tea and took off for birding. It was too late to go to any of the main forest areas, as the light was expected to fade in a couple of hours, so we decided to bird near the resort, which was on the banks of the Cauvery (aka Kaveri) River.

Black-hooded Oriole

Common Iora

The list for the afternoon session started with a handful of commoners – a pair of Black-hooded Orioles, along with a Common Kingfisher, a Common Iora, a Red-rumped Swallow, and several White-browed Wagtails. Then we came upon the first special sighting of the evening – the beautiful Chestnut-headed Bee-eater. It was quite distant, though.

White-browed Wagtail

White-bellied Drongo

Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker

We took a short drive to a nearby patch of forest, where we notched up several White-bellied Drongos and a Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker. Nearby, on the river, we saw a lovely Woolly-necked Stork.

As we walked around, we got lucky and came upon a beautiful specimen of something that normally takes some finding – the Grizzled Giant Squirrel!

While the area is known for this Squirrel (*Ratufa macroura*), it is not so easy to locate it, and we thanked our stars that we had chanced upon it like this. Although the Squirrel was feeding, it also seemed to be curious about us, especially at the beginning, and spent a few moments staring at us – giving us a good view, too, and a good opportunity to take some photos.

Grizzled Giant Squirrel

Grey Junglefowl female

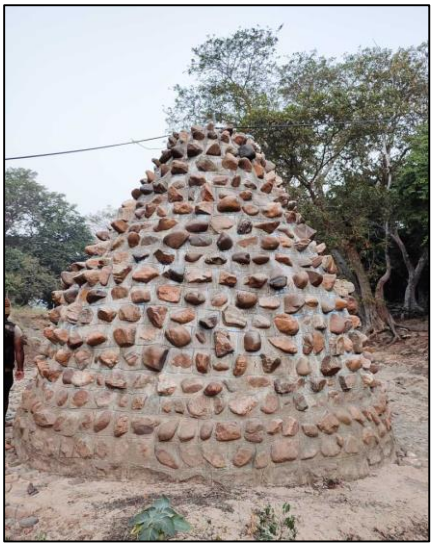
After watching it to our hearts' content, we returned to our resort, where we saw a pair of Grey Junglefowl within the premises. This was to be a regular sight over the next couple of days – although we never did manage to photograph them properly.

<u>Day-2: Feb 20, 2022: Cauvery WLS</u>

A view of the Cauvery River from Bhimeshwari

We started the day with birding at the river bank near the resort. The first bird we saw was a fairly uncommon one for us – the Stork-billed Kingfisher – along with its cousin, the Common Kingfisher. A couple of trees in the middle of the river were loaded with Great and Little Cormorants, which had presumably roosted there overnight.

There was a small stream parallel to the main river, which presently was dry. As we walked on the bed, we came upon a curious structure which was like a mound made of cement, with lots of stones stuck on it. We could not figure out what its purpose might be – one of the possibly wild theories was that maybe it was meant to act as a breakwater in case of floods! Strangely, it also had an electrical cable running across its top.



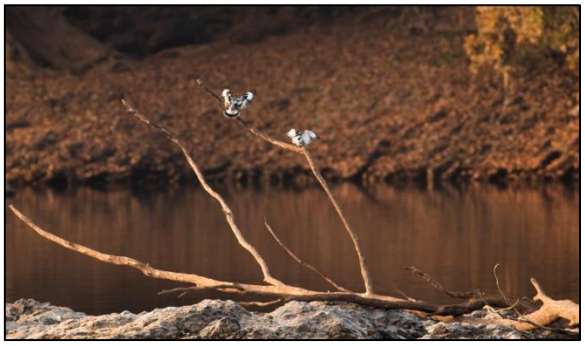
The structure in the dry stream bed

Green Imperial Pigeon

As we walked along, a raucous flock of Green Imperial Pigeons arrived, and we had the opportunity to feast our eyes and take a few photographs. A Mugger slowly glided past on the river, reminding us that we should be careful about venturing too close.

Mugger

A pair of Pied Kingfishers were actively hunting – it was interesting to watch them as they made a few sorties from their perch on a bare stick in the middle of the river. Oriental Turtle Doves turned out to be quite common in the area, and we had plenty of close encounters with them.



Pied Kingfisher

Oriental Turtle Dove

Woolly-necked Stork

A Woolly-necked Stork flew lazily past, allowing us to admire its fluffy looks. River Terns were active on the river, and so were a group of Rhesus Macaques on the river bank. We witnessed a mock fight, with a couple of them hissing and making faces at each other.

River Tern

Rhesus Macaque

Then came the sighting I personally had been waiting for – my first lifer of the trip, the Lesser Fish Eagle. Sasi located a nest in a tree on the other side of the river but, in spite of all attempts, I could not see the nest, although we did see the pair of eagles carry twigs to the nest a few times. The action was way too far, and in the midst of a lot of clutter, to be able to take good photographs, and I was a little disappointed. Sasi informed us that the eagles do occasionally come across to this side of the river too.

After a half hour or so, the others decided to walk around a little, and look for other birds. I decided to stay put, however, hoping that the eagles would oblige me with a better view at some point. After nearly an hour of waiting, I was beginning to wonder if they would ever move out, when one of them decided to take pity on me, and flew over to another tree – still on the other side of the river, but a more bare and exposed tree, so at least I could see the eagle properly.

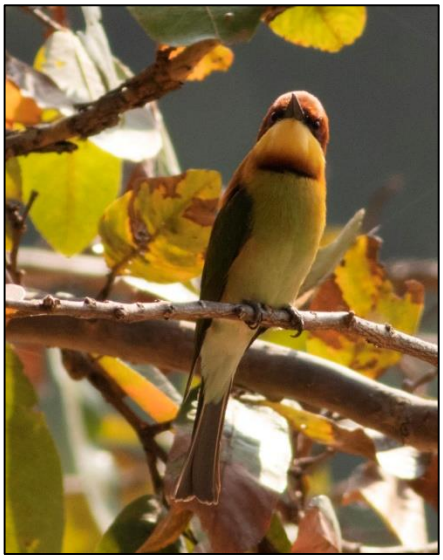
And, in spite of the distance, I took quite a few photographs – after all, it was a lifer!

Lesser Fish Eagle

Like most raptors, the call of the Lesser Fish Eagle is a most unlikely-sounding one, but quite piercing nevertheless. I heard this individual calling away, possibly to convince his mate to take a break from nesting duties. However, she did not oblige and, after a fairly long but fruitless period, this eagle flew back to the nest.

Another view of the Cauvery River

It was only around 9:30AM, but it was already quite hot. Realising that the action was probably over for now, Sasi and I decided to walk back, and look for more birds *en route*. Almost immediately, I came upon a couple of Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters, closer this time, and I was able to get some decent photographs.

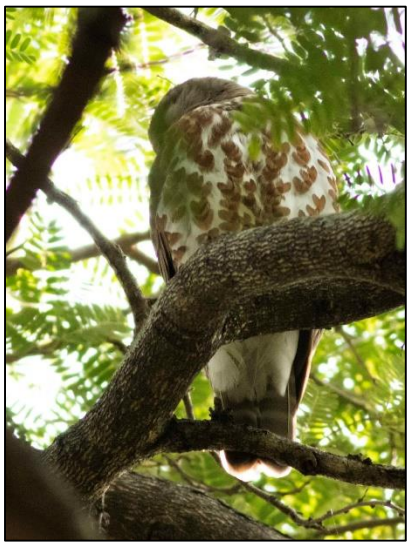


Chestnut-headed Bee-eater

Stork-billed Kingfisher

We also saw another Stork-billed and a Common Kingfisher. Moving along, we were informed that a Brown Hawk Owl was present in one of the trees nearby. As we approached, we saw our friends there, craning their necks to get a view. However, it was directly overhead and almost at the top of the tree, making it impossible to see properly.

Common Kingfisher



Brown Hawk Owl

Agama (*Psammophilus sp*)

White-browed Wagtails were aplenty, including a few juveniles. We also saw a young Agama (*Psammophilus sp*).

We then had a few hours to kill before embarking on the evening session. A quick nap before lunch seemed to be in order, although when I woke up, I was surprised to note that Arun had instead gone for a long solo walk, lugging his heavy gear, in the hot sun!

In the evening, a couple of Forest Department staff told us about a watchtower atop a small hillock a few kilometres away, and took us there; this afforded a great view of the sweeping expanse of the Cauvery River.

View of the Cauvery River from the watchtower

There weren't too many birds there, although one interesting species we saw was the Crested Treeswift – I was seeing this bird after several years, and it was very satisfying to watch them in action. Around 4-5 of them were flying around, accompanied by a couple of Red-rumped Swallows.

Crested Treeswift

After some time, the Forest Department staff asked us if we would like to walk down the hillock and along the river, back to the resort. The others took up their offer, while I decided to drive back and bird near the river.

Initially there was nothing much to see, and I perched myself on the sand near the river, all the time keeping an eye out for the Mugger! A few Cormorants and River Terns later, I shifted my spot a little further, and saw the Mugger basking in the evening sun on a rock in the middle of the river. He looked like he was quite enjoying himself!

Mugger basking

I saw a few Sand Martins flying around over the river, hawking insects in flight. There was also a Macaque with half an arm missing – I wondered at the events that led up to that.

By now the sun was beginning to go down, and the others also arrived. I was relieved to hear that that I didn't miss any special sightings! We then retired to the rooms to charge our batteries and recharge ourselves. Tomorrow was going to be an important day – Sasi told us that we would drive towards some other patches of forest that were usually quite productive.

Day-3: Feb 21, 2022: Cauvery WLS

We started off around 7:00AM and immediately saw a Grey Junglefowl on the side of the road. We did not stop, however, as we had a lot of ground to cover today. The first sighting in the forest was a pair of Crested Serpent Eagles. This was followed almost immediately by a pair of Darters on the river, and the customary Mugger.

Crested Serpent Eagle

Darter

Cattle on the island

Green Bee-eater

We were puzzled to see some cattle on an island in the river, and wondered how they had got there. A basking Green Bee-eater gave good views, a Jerdon's Bushlark scuttled among the dry grass, and a couple of Indian Silverbills also came by.

Jerdon's Bushlark

Suddenly we saw a Shikra inside the tangle of the scrub which turned out to be not a Shikra but a Common Hawk Cuckoo! It allowed us to watch for a few seconds before hopping deeper into the scrub.

Common Hawk Cuckoo

Greater Spotted Eagle

Grey Langur

Then came the first of the raptors – a Greater Spotted Eagle perched on the top of a small tree. It took off after a while, and we drove on. Red-rumped Swallows were aplenty. A Grey (aka Hanuman) Langur sat, arms akimbo, bang in the middle of the track. We stopped to watch it for a while, and Arun felt that it was playing watchman – keeping an eye out for predators while the rest of his group moved to safety.

Steppe Eagle

Short-toed Snake Eagle

A Short-toed Snake Eagle put in an appearance, circling around a few times before moving away. A Steppe Eagle preened itself on a tree, engaging us for a while. A few Crested Treeswifts made their presence felt. Another Greater Spotted Eagle perched right at the tip of a dead tree had us puzzled for a while. We also saw a Black Eagle in the distance.

Happy at the slew of raptor sightings – although quite confused! – we drove on. We came to a small eco-camp run by the Jungle Lodges; they told us that an Indian Scops Owl was there, and very kindly allowed us to enter their premises to take a look. It was comfortably ensconced in a small tree hollow, and seemed to be fast asleep. As we approached, the owl cracked open one eye, took a look at us, then went back to sleep. We watched it for a while and took a few record shots. We weren't really satisfied, as the angle was far from ideal – but an owl is an owl!

Indian Scops Owl

We also got some really good views of a Grizzled Giant Squirrel, which foraged for a while before settling down, seemingly to sun itself. Then we drove ahead. A Jerdon's Bushlark was seen well by the track, and a very plain-looking Pipit had us puzzled. It was later identified as a Blyth's Pipit.

Many-keeled Grass Skink

We stopped at a restaurant for breakfast, and saw a beautiful Skink which was later identified as a young Keeled Indian Mabuya (*Eutropis carinata*), also known as the Many-keeled Grass Skink or 'Golden Skink'.

House Sparrow adult (L) and young (R)

While we were waiting, we heard a commotion outside the window, and saw a young House Sparrow demanding to be fed. Like most youngsters, this one too was perfectly peaceful while the parent was away – but at the first sight of the parent, the racket would start again! We got to watch the young one being fed at least 2-3 times before it came our turn to feed.

Red Hairy Caterpillar (*Amsacta albistriga*)

We also saw another pair of House Sparrows mating – breeding season seemed to be in full swing.

View at Sangam

We came to a place called Sangam which, as the name suggests, is the confluence of the Cauvery and Arkavathi rivers. There were a number of pilgrims taking a holy dip in the water, but there were also some birds on some sandbars a little way away. I stayed back on this shore, while Sasi and Arun decided to make the crossing, wading through waist-deep water with all their gear! It turned out to be well worth their effort, though, as they got excellent views of a pair of Small Pratincoles.

Small Pratincole

White-browed Wagtail pair

I saw a pair of White-browed Wagtails engaged in what seemed to be a courtship ritual, as they flew around each other, darting at each other and occasionally bumping into each other in flight. I also saw another ‘one-armed bandit’ – a Macaque with a truncated arm. This was the second one I was seeing in two days, and I wondered what might be the reasons. Results of a fight or a predator attack, maybe?

One-armed Rhesus Macaque

We then decided to drive on, and came across a pair of Yellow-wattled Lapwings, one of which seemed to be incubating. We did not get down from the vehicle, not wanting to disturb or scare the birds – but we did get to see one of them engaging in a broken-wing display! It was amazing to watch.

Yellow-wattled Lapwing broken wing display

A couple of Indian Rollers were also around, hunting actively. We saw them make repeated sallies in the air and to the ground, picking up insects.

Indian Roller

We stopped for a quick lunch at a roadside eatery, and saw a flock of Small Minivets hopping around in the nearby trees.

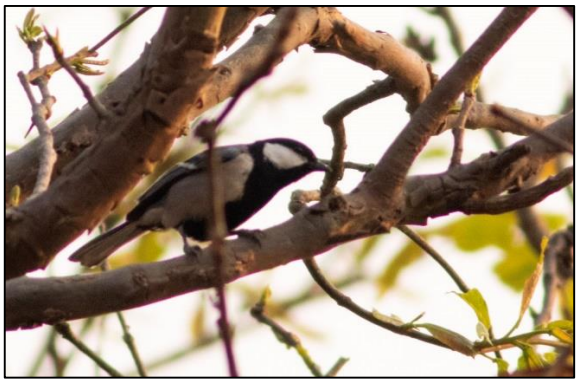
Driving on, we came across a wooded patch where we saw the Brown-capped Pygmy and Yellow-fronted Woodpeckers and several White-bellied Drongos.

Grizzled Giant Squirrel peeling a Sweet Lime

We came to another Jungle Lodges property, this one at Galibore. Here we saw another Grizzled Giant Squirrel, which was busily stripping the peel off a Sweet Lime – the dexterity with which it handled the fruit, turning it round and round as it removed the peel, was incredible. One of the staff told us that it was a female, and was going to take the fruit to feed its young.

It was afternoon and getting on for the time we needed to start moving back towards Ramanagara for our night train back to Chennai, but we still had an hour or so, and decided to try and spend some time at a spot on the Cauvery where Smooth-coated Otters were said to be seen every now and then.

View from 'Otter Point'



Cinereous Tit

Lesser Fish Eagle

We did get a few glimpses of the Otters, but not enough to feel satisfied about. While we were waiting, I walked around a little, looking for birds. I managed to notch up a few more species – Common Woodshrike, Shikra, Cinereous Tit, another Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker – and another pair of Lesser Fish Eagles! This time they flew past pretty close by – as if to say goodbye.

It had been a bit of a whirlwind trip, but quite productive. For me personally, besides my two lifers – the Lesser Fish Eagle and the Grizzled Giant Squirrel – there had been a bunch of other interesting sightings, and there were so many areas not yet explored. We left with the feeling that we would be back soon… fingers crossed!

The full list of birds seen during the trip is given below:

Bird List - Ramadevarabatta WLS					
Sl #	**Species Name**	**Scientific Name**	**Sl #**	**Species Name**	**Scientific Name**
1	Grey Francolin	*Francolinus pondicerianus*	29	Little Swift	*Apus affinis*
2	Asian Openbill	*Anastomus oscitans*	30	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
3	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*	31	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*
4	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*	32	Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*
5	Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*	33	Indian Grey Hornbill	*Ocyceros birostris*
6	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	34	White-cheeked Barbet	*Psilopogon viridis*
7	Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	35	Coppersmith Barbet	*Psilopogon haemacephalus*
8	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*	36	Lesser Goldenback (aka Black-rumped Flameback)	*Dinopium benghalense*
9	Indian Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*	37	Common Iora	*Aegithina tiphia*
10	Shaheen Falcon	*Falco peregrinus peregrinator*	38	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
11	Black-winged Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*	39	Indian Golden Oriole	*Oriolus kundoo*
12	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*	40	Black-hooded Oriole	*Oriolus xanthornus*
13	Brahminy Kite	*Haliastur indus*	41	Asian Paradise-flycatcher	*Terpsiphone paradisi*
14	Long-billed (aka Indian) Vulture	*Gyps indicus*	42	Rufous Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*
15	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*	43	Indian Jungle Crow	*Corvus (macrorhynchos) culminatus*
16	White-breasted Waterhen	*Amaurornis phoenicurus*	44	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*
17	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	45	Cinereous Tit	*Parus cinereus*
18	River Tern	*Sterna aurantia*	46	Dusky Crag Martin	*Ptyonoprogne concolor*
19	Blue Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	47	Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*
20	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	48	Red-whiskered Bulbul	*Pycnonotus jocosus*
21	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*	49	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
22	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*	50	White-browed Bulbul	*Pycnonotus luteolus*
23	Common Hawk Cuckoo	*Hierococcyx varius*	51	Yellow-browed Bulbul	*Acritillas indica*
24	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*	52	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*
25	Blue-faced Malkoha	*Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*	53	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*
26	Sirkeer Malkoha	*Taccocua leschenaultii*	54	Greenish Warbler	*Phylloscopus trochiloides*
27	Southern Coucal	*Centropus (sinensis) parroti*	55	Puff-throated Babbler	*Pellorneum ruficeps*
28	Indian Scops Owl	*Otus bakkamoena*	56	Yellow-billed Babbler	*Turdoides affinis*

Bird List - Ramadevarabatta WLS (contd)					
Sl #	**Species Name**	**Scientific Name**	**Sl #**	**Species Name**	**Scientific Name**
57	Oriental White-eye	*Zosterops palpebrosus*	64	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	*Cyornis tickelliae*
58	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*	65	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*
59	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*	66	Purple-rumped Sunbird	*Leptocoma zeylonica*
60	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus*	67	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*
61	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*	68	Red Avadavat	*Amandava amandava*
62	Blue-capped Rock Thrush	*Monticola cinclorhynchus*	69	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*
63	Asian Brown Flycatcher	*Muscicapa dauurica*	70	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*

Bird List - Cauvery WLS					
Sl #	**Species Name**	**Scientific Name**	**Sl #**	**Species Name**	**Scientific Name**
1	Grey Francolin	*Francolinus pondicerianus*	33	Whiskered Tern	*Chlidonias hybrida*
2	Grey Junglefowl	*Gallus sonneratii*	34	Blue Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*
3	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*	35	Green Imperial Pigeon	*Ducula aenea*
4	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*	36	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*
5	Asian Openbill	*Anastomus oscitans*	37	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*
6	Woolly-necked Stork	*Ciconia episcopus*	38	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*
7	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*	39	Malabar Parakeet	*Psittacula columboides*
8	Red-naped Ibis	*Pseudibis papillosa*	40	Common Hawk Cuckoo	*Hierococcyx varius*
9	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*	41	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*
10	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*	42	Blue-faced Malkoha	*Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*
11	Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*	43	Sirkeer Malkoha	*Taccocua leschenaultii*
12	Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	44	Southern Coucal	*Centropus (sinensis) parroti*
13	Great Egret	*Ardea alba*	45	Indian Scops Owl	*Otus bakkamoena*
14	Darter	*Anhinga melanogaster*	46	Jungle Owlet	*Glaucidium radiatum*
15	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*	47	Brown Fish Owl	*Ketupa zeylonensis*
16	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*	48	Brown Hawk Owl	*Ninox scutulata*
17	Black-winged Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*	49	Asian Palm Swift	*Cypsiurus balasiensis*
18	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*	50	Crested Treeswift	*Hemiprocne coronata*
19	Brahminy Kite	*Haliastur indus*	51	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*
20	Lesser Fish Eagle	*Icthyophaga humilis*	52	Stork-billed Kingfisher	*Pelargopsis capensis*
21	Oriental Honey-buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhynchus*	53	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
22	Short-toed Snake Eagle	*Circaetus gallicus*	54	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*
23	Crested Serpent Eagle	*Spilornis cheela*	55	Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*
24	Black Eagle	*Ictinaetus malayensis*	56	Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*
25	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*	57	Indian Grey Hornbill	*Ocyceros birostris*
26	Greater Spotted Eagle	*Aquila clanga*	58	Brown-headed Barbet	*Psilopogon zeylanicus*
27	Steppe Eagle	*Aquila nipalensis*	59	White-cheeked Barbet	*Psilopogon viridis*
28	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	60	Coppersmith Barbet	*Psilopogon haemacephalus*
29	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus malabaricus*	61	Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	*Dendrocopos nanus*
30	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	62	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	*Dendrocopos mahrattensis*
31	Small Pratincole	*Glareola lactea*	63	Lesser Goldenback (aka Black-rumped Flameback)	*Dinopium benghalense*
32	River Tern	*Sterna aurantia*	64	Common Woodshrike	*Tephrodornis pondicerianus*

Bird List - Cauvery WLS (contd)					
Sl #	**Species Name**	**Scientific Name**	**Sl #**	**Species Name**	**Scientific Name**
65	Black-headed Cuckooshrike	*Coracina melanoptera*	86	White-browed Bulbul	*Pycnonotus luteolus*
66	Common Iora	*Aegithina tiphia*	87	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*
67	Small Minivet	*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*	88	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*
68	Brown Shrike	*Lanius cristatus*	89	Greenish Warbler	*Phylloscopus trochiloides*
69	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*	90	Yellow-billed Babbler	*Turdoides affinis*
70	White-bellied Drongo	*Dicrurus caerulescens*	91	Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	*Sitta frontalis*
71	Black-hooded Oriole	*Oriolus xanthornus*	92	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*
72	Asian Paradise-flycatcher	*Terpsiphone paradisi*	93	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*
73	Rufous Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*	94	White-rumped Shama	*Copsychus malabaricus*
74	Indian Jungle Crow	*Corvus (macrorhynchos) culminatus*	95	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus*
75	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*	96	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*
76	Cinereous Tit	*Parus cinereus*	97	Jerdon's Leafbird	*Chloropsis jerdoni*
77	Sand Martin (aka Bank Swallow)	*Riparia riparia*	98	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*
78	Dusky Crag Martin	*Ptyonoprogne concolor*	99	Purple-rumped Sunbird	*Leptocoma zeylonica*
79	Wire-tailed Swallow	*Hirundo smithii*	100	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*
80	Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*	101	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*
81	Red-rumped Swallow	*Cecropis daurica*	102	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*
82	Jerdon's Bushlark	*Mirafra affinis*	103	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*
83	Red-whiskered Bulbul	*Pycnonotus jocosus*	104	Blyth's Pipit	*Anthus godlewskii*
84	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*	105	Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	*Merops leschenaulti*
85	Yellow-browed Bulbul	*Acritillas indica*			

* * *

Bird Humour

Umesh Mani

(From Facebook, November 13, 2021)

* * *

Bird of the Month

Text and Photos: Umesh Mani

Streak-throated Swallow (*Petrochelidon fluvicola*)

Streak-throated Swallow (Rollapadu, October 12, 2019)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Hirundinidae
Genus: *Petrochelidon*
Species: *P. fluvicola*
Size: 11-12 cm

Description & distribution: The Streak-throated Swallow, also known as the Indian Cliff Swallow, is a resident species of swallow across most of its range, which extends from Afghanistan and Pakistan east through Jammu & Kashmir, along the base of the Himalayas (including Nepal), all the way to the Sikkim Dooars and Bangladesh; and south across the entire Indian peninsula to about 10ºN (Point Calimere). Besides, it is occasionally reported as a vagrant from Maldives, Sri Lanka and the Middle East. It was originally placed in the genus *Hirundo*.

The Streak-throated Swallow, like most other swallows, is glossy steel-blue above, and has a pale brown rump, lightly-streaked mantle, dull chestnut forehead and crown. The underparts are whitish with bold brown streaking on chin, throat and upper breast. The tail is long, broad and squarish with a slight fork, much like the Dusky Crag Martin. The sexes are alike. The juvenile has a duller, browner crown and a brown-toned mantle and wings with buff fringes.

Habitat & behaviour: The Streak-throated Swallow is usually found in medium to large congregations in cultivated areas and open country near water; and near rivers, moats, canals, reservoirs and lakes, where it is usually seen hawking midges and other insects via aerial sorties, often close over water, and usually in the company of other swallows and House Swifts. In winters, they are often seen in groups of up to several hundreds, perched on telephone wires in close-packed lines and sunning themselves. Its usual call is a twittering *chirp*, and a sharp *trr trr* may be uttered in flight.

Nesting: The Streak-throated Swallow breeds almost across the year, but mainly from December to April and July to October. It is a colonial nester; the nest is an agglomeration of mud, with several 'pots' fused together, each with a short tunnel entrance. Nests are usually built under bridges over canals or gateway arches etc, usually near water, and often within urban boundaries. The usual clutch consists of 3-4 eggs, normally white but sometimes with brownish smudges.

Local name: The Streak-throated Swallow is known as *'Nahar ababil'* in Hindi, *'Nahari ababil'* in Punjabi, and *'Bhekhad ababil'* or *'Nanu tharodiyu'* in Gujarati.

* * *